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Transportation

Position

The Delaware Transit Corporation operates DART First State. DART First State manages the bus and paratransit systems in Delaware, along with other transportation options.

- “Transportation” helps people get from place to place. It includes things like cars, buses, taxis, trains, and ferries.
- “Public Transportation” includes buses, trains, and ferries that are open to everyone. The routes and schedules they follow are set.
- “Paratransit” provides transportation for people who cannot use regular public transportation. Paratransit services are more individualized to help people get where they need to go.

The Delaware Transit Corporation and DART believe Delawareans must have a public transportation service that is accessible. This means it meets everyone’s needs. All parts of the system must work well together and use the best technology available. Workers must have good training, communicate clearly, and develop good partnerships with people with disabilities and the state. They must help people get where they need to go. Transportation must be fairly priced, safe, and efficient. “Efficient” means the transportation is the best it can be with little wasted time and effort.

Transportation services must:

- Be reliable. That means the transportation comes on time and gets you where you need to go.

- Operate in all parts of the state, including rural areas.
- Be available during emergencies and natural disaster recovery. An example is hurricane evacuation.
- Help riders with disabilities who have an urgent need for transportation but cannot give 24 hours' notice.
- Include weekends hours statewide.
- Use a scheduling system that communicates immediately with drivers. This will help drivers pick people up on time. It will also help them avoid going to pick people up when they have canceled their trip.
- Help more people with disabilities to own their own car or van. This would include an education program for people with disabilities about using a modified vehicle. A modified vehicle is a car or van that has been changed so someone can drive it. One example is hand controls that work the brakes in place of foot pedals.
- Have a place where people can find information about all transportation options.
- Have qualified, fairly-paid, well-trained, and reliable drivers.
- Have accessible bus stops for all riders.
- Have accessible gas pumps and electric vehicle charging stations for everyone.
- Include emergency roadside assistance for drivers who use wheelchairs whose vehicles break down on the road.
- Include an accessible, fairly priced taxi service.
- Have a panel to review customer problems and how good the transportation system is. A "panel" is a group of people picked to work together to review the transportation system. The panel must:
 - Include people with disabilities.
 - Be impartial. "Impartial" means the panel is open to all ideas. Members of the panel make decisions without considering what is best for them personally.

- Be independent. “Independent” means the panel controls its work and makes its own decisions.
- Include an appeals process to deal with disagreements.

Discussion

The Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council fully supports a transportation system that is accessible, fairly priced, and dependable for all riders in Delaware.

The number of people moving to Delaware from other states to live and retire has been growing quickly. People have also been moving from urban areas of Delaware into suburban and rural areas. This has created a demand for a larger transportation system with more options.

- “Urban areas” are cities and towns where a lot of people live close together.
- “Suburban areas” are the communities outside of cities.
- “Rural areas” are the parts of the state where there are not a lot of homes or other buildings close together, and not very many people.

People with disabilities are choosing to live in their own homes and communities rather than in institutions or other places that separate them from everyone else. People with disabilities expect to be active members of their communities. They need public transportation more than ever before to make this happen. As a result, more people are using public transportation every year.

Everyone expects all parts of the transportation system to be safe, dependable, accessible, and fairly priced. The system must always respond and answer to its riders, the taxpayers, and the people in Delaware.

Recommendations

Delaware must:

- 1) Form a panel to review how good the transportation system is and customer problems. The panel must include people with disabilities. The panel must be impartial and independent.
- 2) Develop an emergency roadside assistance program for drivers who use wheelchairs whose vehicles break down on the road.
- 3) Expand transportation services to include weekend hours all over Delaware.
- 4) Make all public bus stops in Delaware accessible so everyone can easily use them.
- 5) Improve driver training to better serve people with disabilities. DART should get input from riders with disabilities about what needs to change.
- 6) Make portable chairs available to more children with disabilities. This will make transportation for families easier.
- 7) Develop and carry out a plan to make taxis accessible and fairly priced.
- 8) Stop raising the rates for paratransit rides.

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